

THE
GOSPEL MINISTER

ZIMMERMAN

'The Word of God Remains Forever'

1 Peter 1:25



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1860.**

The gospel minister

The Gospel Minister

By

L. M. ZIMMERMAN



BALTIMORE, MD.
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THE GOSPEL MINISTER

*A series of short reflections and meditations,
dealing with the noblest of all callings.*

*Prepared by one who spent the best years of
his life as a Gospel minister*

*And who, speaking now in the after-glow
of an exceedingly busy and eventful
career, desires to declare that,*

*If he could live over again the days of his
youth, he would desire no greater favor
than to be permitted once more to take
up his Master's service in the work of
the Gospel ministry.*



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FOREWORD

Evangelists are admitting that their method of work is a failure, that the only adequate way is the constant, continuous preaching of the Gospel by the minister as he stands on the towers of Zion and mingles with his people in the home and on the street.

Few men in the Lutheran Church in America have come closer to this ideal than the Rev. Leander M. Zimmerman, D. D. In the Tercentenary History of Maryland, he is spoken of as "One of the outstanding representatives of the Maryland ministry and perhaps one of the best known and most loved divines in the state. . . . An easy and charming writer as well as forceful speaker, numerous contributions from his facile pen have marked the years of his ministerial work, teaching the way to happiness, helpfulness and moral and spiritual strength."

Dr. Zimmerman graduated from Gettysburg College in 1884 with the degree of Master of Arts, and from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 1887. In the same year he was ordained and took up home-mission work in South Baltimore, where he organized and established Christ Lutheran Church, his first and only parish, serving there until 1925—a period of thirty-eight years. His work was so remarkable and successful that, already in 1901, Susquehanna University honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. As the years passed his influence grew until he preached to twenty-two hundred persons. The church building had to be enlarged several times and amplifiers installed in order to accommodate the crowds.

His fellow ministers in the Lutheran Ministers Association of Baltimore, congratulating him on his thirty-fifth anniversary, referred to it as a rare event and "one that few pastors and people experience. . . . We are glad that your people and the great congregations of strangers who worship at Christ Church continue to appreciate the precious truths of the glorious Gospel as presented by their faithful and distinguished pastor in the face of a too prevalent clamor nowadays for new things and spectacular methods. Only a pastor of exceptional personality and many talents could have made a history like yours through published books and extensive writings on many subjects, gathering at the same time a devoted and church-loving people, who have so efficiently and faithfully supported you during these thirty-five years."

The reported words of Spurgeon might well be those of Dr. Zimmerman: "I have come, and, as regularly, the crowds have come, year in and year out. On what theme could I have spoken so many years to the same people and held their interest? If I had spoken on science, politics, books, socialism, my congregation would have scattered long ago." His message has always been the gospel of "Jesus and His love."

It is not to be wondered at that a minister of such ability and power should receive, on his twenty-fifth anniversary, congratulations from President Roosevelt and Cardinal Gibbons.

But Dr. Zimmerman has not limited his service to one local church; he has always kept in mind the Church at large. Accordingly, we find that he was a member of the Deaconess Board, the Home Mis-

sion Board, and the Loysville Orphans' Home Board. He served as president of the Maryland Synod. He was the president of the Alumni Association of the Gettysburg Theological Seminary. In these and other ways his work has been notable in influence and extensive in scope.

Although it is forty-three years since he was ordained, Dr. Zimmerman has not stopped preaching. Constantly he supplies the pulpit of a sick pastor or a vacant church. And now, in the twilight of life, he wishes to speak to his fellow-ministers, especially to the young minister, out of the fullness and richness of his experience, on the subject which, next to the Gospel, is nearest his heart—*The Gospel Minister*. Besides the passion for souls, he has a passion for successors who will carry on the work on firm foundations and according to efficient and sane methods.

In this volume the minister's work is correctly pictured as that of prophet and pastor. As prophet he stands in the pulpit proclaiming the "Thus, saith the Lord"—in an age which yearns for certainty. As pastor he mingles with his people, comforting, directing, guarding, healing and saving them—in an age which knows not whence it has come or whither it is going.

If the church is to retain its hold upon those within and to gain the attention and interest of those without, we are convinced it shall be done along lines suggested by Dr. Zimmerman in this volume. People will respond to the true Gospel. People do want a pastor with whom they may discuss the great problems of life, and, in confidence, their own personal problems.

As Dr. Zimmerman lays down the pen of this, perhaps his last great effort, he may feel that his work goes on. Just as the pebble cast into the still water of the lake makes ripples which grow smaller as they pass from sight, but which make the material structure of the universe somehow different from what it was before, so the lives touched by him through this volume will touch and inspire other lives in turn until there flows to the outermost circumference of human interest and abode, a stream of significant influence moulding the hearts of people everywhere. This is his work invisible.

GOULD WICKEY, D. D.,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, BOARD OF EDUCATION,
UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA.

AN APPRECIATION

What is the best method of winning souls for the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Do we need more brilliant preaching? Do we need more scholarship in the pulpit? Do we need more highly organized pastoral service? To these questions various answers are being given, many of which, instead of clarifying the problem, have only served to make it more difficult. To these questions our dear friend, Dr. Zimmerman, after completing a long and arduous ministry, gives his answer. What a clear and convincing answering it is! How refreshing! How encouraging! *The best method of winning souls for the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to love souls—to love them unceasingly—to love them even as Jesus loved men!*

Dr. Zimmerman's method is evangelical, Lutheran, in a very strict sense. At the same time it is individual to a high degree. It is altogether devoid of that stiffness and formality which are often the bane of the service of those who are bound by liturgical form and order. There is a friendliness, an affection about our brother's method, transcending liturgical form and order and reaching out to touch the heart of the listener. Is it a Lutheran custom, in the general prayer of the morning service, to mention by name individuals of the congregation or the community who may be in need and to pray for their relief and welfare? The writer of these words does not believe it is. It is his thought that our Lutheran church-prayers are, as a rule, so general and so impersonal in character that the mention of individuals by name is quite regularly omitted. Dr. Zimmerman tells us that in his prayers he prays

for individuals and that he often names the very persons for whom he prays. He prays for the world but he does not forget that the world is made up of human beings, each one of whom possesses his own peculiar problem of sin and sorrow. This individual concern, illustrated in this one instance, has pervaded the entire work of Dr. Zimmerman. It is undoubtedly one of the explanations for his success. It is one of the reasons why, starting a mission work in the City of Baltimore years ago, he was able to make his the largest Protestant church in that great city.

It has been the privilege of the writer to read the manuscript of *The Gospel Minister*. It has also been his privilege to discuss intimately and at length many of the problems confronting the Gospel minister of today. The writer believes that this little book is a true expression of the spirit of its author. The statements and recommendations that it makes are not vagaries or theories, spun out of conjecture and idle debate. They are honest conclusions drawn out of a faithful ministry and proven in actual Christian experience. We have plenty of books which theorize at great length over Christian problems. Do we not need more books like *The Gospel Minister*, books which give vivid expression to the actual work of the ministry? After all, who is likely to prove to be the best teacher for the young minister going forth to labor in the vineyard of his Lord? The teacher of philosophy who, from his academic throne, offers a new theory for each new day? Much rather will he not be like the one who speaks in this book—the Gospel minister himself?

God bless this volume and the purpose for which it was written. God give peace to its gracious author and to all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth.

GERHARD E. LENSKI, Ph. D.,
PASTOR OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH,
THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

INTRODUCTION

The following paragraphs are written out of practical experience rather than from a knowledge gained through reading books.

We are told of the occasion when certain friends visited Paul who was in distress and perplexity. During their visit they may not have said anything remarkable to him, but they helped him, for when they left "he thanked God and took courage."

This little volume comes from one who spent thirty-eight continuous years as a pastor in a large city. His words are written especially for the benefit of young men entering the Gospel ministry.

They are not intended to solve the deep problems of religion. May they rather be regarded as a personal testimony. May they furnish food for thought. And may they cause some servant of the Lord, perplexed and distressed, to thank God and to take courage.

Young men about to enter the Gospel ministry, fellow laborers in the noblest of callings, you are builders of heavenly citizenship; you are soldiers in the great army of God with glorious victories to win.

Visions and ideals keep our souls from decrepitude and our minds from decay.

True religion is aggressive, a gracious giving to others of what has first been given to us.

My prayer is that these messages may prove good news for you.

The Gospel is not called good advice, but "good news." So accept, please, this volume as good news from a builder upon the walls of Zion; a tried soldier for forty-four years, who has kept step with the Great Captain and has trodden the way of the Cross, which is the only way for the Gospel minister. Ever recall the words of St. Paul: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

L. M. ZIMMERMAN

*Burlington Hotel,
Washington, D. C.*
October 1, 1930

I.

AS PROPHET

THE PROPHET'S PLACE

A prophet makes known the will of God. He proclaims, not his own message, but the message God has given him. He is God's mouthpiece. He speaks for God. He speaks to the people.

He preaches God's message from the pulpit and as he goes from house to house; he preaches it often more eloquently by living out its truth in daily life.

God's prophet still conforms to Isaiah's description: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

To this end he must be brave to rebuke all manner of sin and, if it need be, to suffer for righteousness' sake.

Ours is a day when positive testimony on the part of the Christian ministry is sorely needed. There is a new kind of vandalism abroad, "spiritual vandalism," wrought by men who selfishly tear down the strongholds of Christian faith and then shout in empty triumph over the ruin they have wrought.

Tearing down faith, these vandals have nothing to give in its place. In such a crisis let the prophet appear once more on the

earth. Let him give his ringing message: "Thus saith the Lord."

He must meet the needs of men. He is not one to hurt and to destroy, but to nurse and make alive.

Like the gardener who digs about the feeble, withering plant and waters it that it may live and bear fruit, so the prophet goes forth to labor among the people. Those in the street, as well as those in the church, will claim his kindly attention. Thus he makes himself a friend of man and wins—by patience and kindness—the hearts of those who, at first, may be inclined to hate him and to turn from him.

Love is the prophet's weapon. The more we love our fellowmen, with all their shortcomings, the more we will love the Christ who lived and died for sinners and the more easily will we be able to bring them to the cross. Let us try to love men to the cross rather than to argue them there.

THE PROPHET'S CALL

God's call for leaders may sometimes be made when the one called is yet too young to know anything about the call.

From the very beginning Moses was called by God when his mother hid him and Pharaoh's daughter adopted him.

A clear definition of what constitutes a call to the Gospel ministry is not easy to give. Perhaps there are no two exactly alike. Let me relate how my call came.

I have been told that, when I was a tiny baby, my mother, on one of her visits to a neighboring friend, placed me on a bed beside the sleeping child of that neighbor. These two mothers then began to converse hopefully as to the future of their offspring.

"What would you like to see your baby become?" the neighbor inquired of my mother.

"I have already dedicated him to the Gospel ministry," was her response.

Mothers may not fully realize it, but in a large measure they mould the child's future by thought, example and precept. As I grew older mother would sit with an open Bible and explain to me the Word of God. Then, one glorious day, while engaged in piling bark for men to haul to the tannery, I heard the voice of God call me. I was only a boy. "Be a preacher," that voice said in no unmistakable words.

Without stopping to argue, the call was heeded. At once I started walking to our pastor, four miles away, to tell him of my experience and that I wanted to be a

preacher. All down the long years the voice of God has directed me in my course both as to what to say and what to do. To Him, and, next to Him, to my dear pious mother, be the glory for my call into the ministry.

But not all are equally prepared by a godly mother, and perhaps the call of God is hard to hear because there is often a spiritual deafness toward such calls.

One thing is certain—God, as a rule, calls men into the ministry who are strong both physically and spiritually. Piety is a fundamental requisite, but piety alone is not sufficient.

A man who is to do faithful work as a prophet must be strong in body, mind and soul. Every day of his life he will be fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil. If he is a weakling he will soon fall a prey to the enemy.

He must therefore find opportunity and take time to conserve and to build up his physical and mental health.

In this respect he gives time also to healthful recreations.

The minister is a man living with ordinary folk, and the puritanical criticisms often directed against his pastimes are evidently unfair.

He too may use the world, yet, indeed, without abusing it.

Amusements, games and sports are not always in the hands of devils while many accusers who are busybodies in other men's affairs may often be.

The Evangelist John said: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong." Only strong men will be able to prepare sermons, visit the sick, attend to pastoral duties and the work of the church. But in the midst of many duties the minister must not be forgetful of his own soul's need. No one should enter this work of the ministry as he would a profession in which the dollar mark is the sign of success.

It is possible for a minister to be deeply concerned about the salvation of others and himself to be a castaway. Let the minister take heed unto himself. Let him cultivate spiritual-mindedness.

Only as men regard the ministry as a high, holy calling ordained of God can they be expected to glorify their work. Men who are weak and unfitted for all other vocations are not, as a rule, called as prophets to serve in the Gospel ministry.

Some may volunteer their services, being attracted by the glamour of the success of

some eloquent divine, but such are rarely called.

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” is God’s call to strong men today. We hear that call in the preaching of the Word and in the need of a world that does not know its God and Saviour.

When a bold Isaiah or a faithful Samuel replies: “Here am I. Send me,” then we may reasonably expect that such a one has been called of God and that, serving God faithfully, his work will be crowned with success.

THE PROPHET’S ASPIRATIONS

The prophet is greater than all his earthly possessions. Oliver Goldsmith was once taunted by a man who scornfully said: “So you live in a basement!” Like a flash came back the stinging retort: “Your soul must live in a basement.”

Man’s body may live in a palace and his soul in a hovel. In like manner, the body may live in a basement, as the prophet serves in some humble field of labor, while his soul lives in the Palace of the King of Kings.

It would probably be good schooling for young ministers leaving the Seminary to be sent to difficult mission fields, rather

than to strongly established congregations. It is not only good to learn to bear burdens, but also to begin at the lower step of the ladder and to climb.

Youthful servants of the Master should be careful not to think themselves full grown when they begin their work in the Gospel ministry. They may be wise, but should avoid the presumptuous manner of those whose very presence seems to say: "When I ope my mouth let no dog bark." Some good men are spoiled by having too many honors heaped upon them in the early days of their ministry. The result may sometimes prove a bit embarrassing. Reaching after "plums" for the sake of honors alone is not the aspiration and ideal of a true prophet. The greatest honors come as the result of great service.

Let the prophet not shun the lowest place. Let him be ready to be the servant of all. But, choosing the lowest place at first is no reason why he should be satisfied to remain there forever. Healthy children grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. Let the prophet grow. Let him reach out for new duties.

No prophet can successfully carry on the Master's work with lukewarm emotions and aspirations. "I must be about my Father's

business," must necessarily be his working motto.

Let the prophet be filled with the Spirit of God, that he may bring spiritual fire to the souls of all he meets. Let his zeal and joy bring zeal and joy to others. Let his good deeds inspire others to the same service.

Thus will he send out the light of Christ and kindle new fire in the hearts of his worshippers so that, figuratively speaking, his church will be aflame with the Spirit of God. Such prophets of God will not long remain in small rooms, but will be compelled to seek larger quarters to accommodate the many who draw near to worship Him under their leadership.

The spiritual fields are indeed rich and ripe for the harvest. Gather, then, the golden grain of precious souls. Nor rest content with little handfuls!

THE PROPHET'S PERSONALITY

A pleasing personality is a true asset. Almost anyone can sell goods once, but to make and keep and always to please a customer requires tact, ability, patience, kindness, proper approach.

These winsome, winning qualities we embrace in one word—personality. And the

thing we call personality, let it be carefully noted, is just as necessary to the preacher in his work as it is to the salesman.

Personality and individuality are two characteristics which can not be described, but which are invariably recognized for what they are whenever they appear. In Jesus they were undoubtedly the essence of God's holiness and love.

Happy are those who, entering the ministry, are blessed with Christlikeness, with a personality that sets its possessors apart by reason of the high and holy spirit in them.

It was Christ's personality that attracted hearers to Him. His personality was electrifying—it acted as a magnet that drew men, both the believer and the sceptic, into His presence. He drew men and He held men. This ability was so pronounced that He was quickly recognized as a true leader.

Christ has shown wherein those who follow Him and who adopt His teachings may use to advantage the personality and the peculiar individuality that is theirs.

Let those who are blessed with magnetic personalities consecrate their gift to Him and walk in His steps and they will not fail to win souls for Him.

Is it a hard thing to say that men who do not have personality—those winning traits that draw and hold men—were, in all probability, intended to serve God in some calling other than that of the ministry? Judging by the failures we have observed as the revealing years have run on, we dare to assert that it is not.

Young ministers will therefore be greatly helped by studying the lives of those prophets of God throughout the church who have justified their calling, or who, living, are now successful in winning souls for Christ.

Observe! See wherein lies the strength of others, and then “study to show thyself approved unto God.”

THE PROPHET’S MESSAGE

God’s prophet, laboring in a changing world, must be able to answer the objections of those who do not hear the Word. He must be able to speak in such a way that he wins men, not merely for the church, but for God.

There is a way of approach to every soul if only the prophet will patiently search for it. God has made men with the capacity for knowing and loving and serving Him. Let the prophet start with that assumption. Let

him make it the theme of his appeal. Let him frame his appeal with the utmost care, realizing that, however good his message may be, if it is poorly presented it may drive men away from, instead of drawing them to, the Saving Cross.

To be formal, dictatorial or mechanical, will defeat the purpose of the best message and will empty a church of devout worshippers. Cold messages will not warm souls cold toward God.

Even those spiritually-minded will soon sense the lack of spirit in a perfunctory or mechanically-delivered message and will either find their way to some other church or permit themselves to be ensnared in one of Satan's many and alluring traps.

Let the prophet *speak for God* and then, though the people may not always be pleased to hear, success will attend the spoken word.

The preacher's delivery is a matter of the utmost importance. He should preach with distinct and clear enunciation, that worshippers may hear and understand what he says. People no longer stand around waiting for church doors to swing open. As a rule, there is no rush for a place in the first pew.

The public may hurry—unbidden—into splendid theaters and attractive stores and

dining halls, but no such haste characterizes their coming into the house of God.

The preacher who copes with the problem of an indifferent public must be something more than a Micawber who waits too patiently "for something to turn up." He must find a way to fill empty pews and to put the spirit of worship in the hearts of those who turn away from God's house.

Blue Monday at Preacher's Meeting is often a pitiful misrepresentation of things that are "true, honest, just and of good report."

"Did you have a good day yesterday?" is a question the average preacher runs into, and frequently the answer is far from encouraging! "Not much! Movies get the people! Many off in automobiles! This is the worst city I've ever been in to do church work!" is frequently the tenor of the replies.

And yet there are others to be found who come back with, "Fine! Great! Wonderful day! Best place for church work I know!" Nor are they of the irrepressible optimists.

Why the difference of opinion? There is a reason.

Some preachers simply refuse to be put out of business.

They hang out their sign. But that is not all.

Where a "Grumpy" or a "Gloom" sits back waiting for people to come hear the "polished message," others go forth with bubbling enthusiasm and buy up opportunities.

They are not content with a display advertisement in Saturday's paper. They realize the need of an everyday activity among the people.

No matter what may be the discouraging moral conditions of the people of the city, they know those very people have moral needs, and as God's prophets they realize their own personal responsibility to supply such needs by a properly prepared, advertised and delivered message.

The hard-beaten path is not always found to the man's house who can write a better book, prepare a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap than his neighbor.

Much depends also upon that same man's ability properly to advertise and to sell his goods.

The minister of the Gospel who excels in his ability to prepare, advertise and deliver God's message, will as a rule find the proverbial well-beaten path to his church where

faithful and devout worshippers assemble for the worship of God.

This is perhaps why some churches must hunt pews for the people, while others must seek people for the pews.

Let the preacher preach the Word. Let him preach it fervently, with thought-provoking and soul-searching power.

Let him apply its truth to everyday life. Let him declare that life is sweeter if shared with Christ. Let him persuade his hearers to believe that there is no happiness here or hereafter except that we should all know and love and serve God.

We live in a day of increasing doubt, scepticism and unbelief. All we have is Christ. Let us present Christ without apology to all doubters and sceptics. Let us show them His beauty and truth and then say: "This is Christ. What do you think of Him?"

There can be no compromise! There can be no compromise!! A thing is either this or that. If it is this, namely, God's Word, then, positively it is not that, only partially God's word, half truth, part doubt.

The message itself is of supreme importance and so also is the manner of its presentation. Care must be exercised lest a soul be imperiled and lost because of an uncertain

message. Let the prophet frame his message in accordance with the understanding of his hearers. It is not to be expected that the average audience is gifted intellectually. The members of the average congregation have not devoted years of time to the intensive study of theology. They know little of most of the fine points of religious doctrine. When preachers discuss such matters they may know their subject well. Does the congregation follow the argument? Not so readily.

Let that fact be recognized. Let clarity be sought after. To this end let short, vigorous words be used.

Let the preacher be careful not to sow the seeds of indifference and then of doubt by presenting God's truth in a high-flown manner which does not lay hold of men's hearts.

There are many who drift away from the church. Dull preaching and too much academic discussion in the pulpit may be partly responsible.

Once started to drift, how far some souls finally get away and how hard it is to bring them back!

The mere thought of all this should spur the preacher to renewed effort. It should

challenge him and all his powers to labor faithfully and "not to grow weary in well-doing."

THE PROPHET PREPARING HIS MESSAGE

St. John speaks of being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The prophet should be in that same Spirit before he attempts to prepare his sermon and also when he preaches it. Unless he himself is first properly prepared he can not prepare a soul-searching and spiritually-helpful message.

The prophet, preparing to speak, should always ask himself: What is the purpose of this message?

The world is large and the preacher can ramble about it in thought as he pleases, from social and secular topics to politics and athletics and what-not.

But what is the purpose of it all? What spiritual good will come from the message being delivered?

No true prophet will think of himself as delivering God's truth to human hearts when, after idling all week long, he picks up on Saturday an old, dusty sermon of earlier years and then preaches it on Sunday.

Let the prophet read the Bible diligently. Let him go to God in prayer and ask for guidance and advice. God knows best what the people need; and if the heart of the prophet is in tune with that of God, study and prayer will produce a timely and helpful message for the Sunday sermon.

Let the prophet remember his Divine commission. He does not stand in the pulpit merely to fill an appointment. He is there representing God, speaking for God.

Perhaps if ministers of the Gospel kept this thought in mind there might be more genuine Gospel messages from the pulpit.

People go to church primarily to worship God, but they also expect when there to receive a message from God, and as God's prophet the minister is the one to prepare and deliver such message.

There is no human heart but has been pierced by sin, sorrow and suffering. That heart needs a healing balm. Such persons are always among your hearers.

Be sure then, brother, that in your messages from the pulpit you speak a good word for Jesus, the Great Physician who healeth us of all our diseases. There is no substitute for the one thing needful.

The indifference manifested toward the church today is often startling. This in-

difference often leads to both a denial and denunciation of principles once held sacred. What is the cause of this indifference? Is it possible that the preaching of false prophets is responsible for the shattered faith of souls that once were true and strong? Here let the prophet take heed to himself. Let his message be true—let it be carefully prepared—let it be aimed at the heart of the hearer, as though God Himself were listening, leaning down to hear.

Blessed is that prophet who is able so to prepare and so to deliver his sermons as to cause his hearers to hunger and thirst after righteousness to the degree that they will want to return again and again to hear him.

Some ask why it is that such prophets attract, as they term it, the crowds.

But those who have heard the messages as if God Himself had spoken to them, explain that they felt a little closer to God and a little happier for having been among the worshippers.

The message of the prophet should invite thought and it should lead to decision. A mere lecture will not do this and will not invite soul-saving repentance.

Be sure in your preparation to have a message that will reach the heart, and not simply entertain the mind.

A prayer whether read or impromptu, may be so formal and cold as to chill the heart of the worshipper. In much the same manner a sermon may be polished, and yet not reach the heart.

However practical the subject of any sermon may be, the content and character of that sermon should always be spiritual, and not merely rhetorical. It should furnish food for the soul. It should convey Divine authority. It should be as a message from God.

Does all this seem difficult? Let us remember that preaching is the noblest of callings, a service which angels might have been honored to perform.

THE PROPHET AND HIS BOOKS

The prophet of God has two books to study—the Bible and the People. From these books he will get his best sermon material.

He need be no omnivorous reader of modern publications and magazines. In fact, if he is studying the lives of his people as he should, he will have comparatively little time for such reading.

Dealing with men and women and children in their needs and sorrows, experiences will come to him to confirm the teachings

of the Bible and to put meaning and power into the formal message of the sermon.

By dealing with young people and talking with them, he will come to know how to preach wisely and well upon the spiritual needs of youth.

By talking with the employer and the employee, by noting the problems of the former and the trials and perils of the latter, by getting their viewpoint and their feeling, the prophet will speak out of actual experience when he discusses the needs of both and, being guided by the Word, he will be bound to preach helpfully and to the point.

The Bible and the People are the two greatest books.

He will read other books to the best of his ability, but these two—the Bible and the People—will furnish the foundation for his study and for all his wider reading, as well as for his public utterances.

May I in passing again resort to personal pronouns?

I have preached many sermons in my ministry. People have said I never preached the same sermon twice.

Before writing these notes I often wondered, but did not know, whence I got my sermons. Now that I think over in

memory the busy days of the past, I believe I know where I got most of the material that made up my sermons.

It came chiefly from two books, my favorites, the Bible and the People.

THE PROPHET AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

An understanding of the Holy Spirit is vital in the maintenance of the Christian faith.

One reason why so many of the newly confirmed and others in the church fall away is due, undoubtedly, to their ignorance of the Spirit and to their lack of truly spiritual experience.

By the means of grace the Holy Spirit deals with human hearts. These means of grace are the Word and the Sacraments. The Word itself is a Sacrament, though not commonly so designated.

What we bring to God are our sacrifices. What God gives to us are His Sacraments. If we are contrite of heart, truly converted, moved by the Spirit, we will lend ourselves cheerfully and readily to the Spirit's working—to the faithful use of the means of grace.

Church attendance then will not be a burdensome duty, while partaking of the Lord's Supper will become a matter of joy and delight.

Whenever a person stands at the altar to take up the cross as a follower of Jesus, he pledges himself to the faithful use of the means of grace. That pledge is made, not to the preacher, but to God. If all members of the church clearly appreciated this fact, none would absent himself from religious services and preachers would no longer see empty pews on days and evenings of devotion.

Perhaps more stress laid upon God's Sacraments and the gift of the Holy Spirit might make it easier and more delightful for some to change their present heavy-hearted devotion into joyous, gladsome service.

It is more than likely that, instead of saying on the Lord's Day: "I'm too tired to go to church," many would then say: "I am thankful for the privilege of going to church to worship my Jesus." Was He too tired when He dragged the cross to Calvary?

It is little enough He asks of us when He summons us to His altar on Sundays!

There is God the Father. There is God the Son. But that is not all. The Trinity is completed by God the Holy Spirit.

Let the preacher give proper emphasis to the third person of the Godhead. Let him make the Spirit's gracious work clear and plain.

Let the minister himself seek more intimate acquaintance with the Spirit in the chamber of prayer where he experiences a sense of God's presence about him and within him.

Church duties make so many demands upon the minister's time that he may easily neglect the source of all spiritual life.

Martin Luther said: "I have an exceedingly busy day; I must spend three hours in prayer." The preacher who does not cultivate the Spirit's acquaintance and seek His grace is robbing himself of power and usefulness.

THE PROPHET AND THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

In speaking of the gospel of love we do not mean a sugar-water or a rose-colored Christ.

We believe fully in the Christ born of a Virgin, the Son of God who died on the cross

of Calvary to save us from everlasting death.

We believe that He was true man and true God, a unique personality with two natures strangely, gloriously united. We believe that He was great in goodness and good in greatness.

We believe that love was the deep motive of His saving ministry.

We believe that when God's prophet, the minister, preaches Christ, he will be preaching the gospel of love as well.

What is the gospel of love? It is Christ crucified—the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

What if there were no gospel of love? Who could be saved, since the best of us fall short of the glory of God? The power that saves is grace, and grace is love's manifestation. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

It is indeed sweet to think of the wonderful love, mercy and grace of God. Of sins truly repented God says: "I will remember them no more forever." "Thou hast cast my sins behind thy back," declared a king in Holy Writ. Our sins are nailed to the Cross.

While the prophet must not go too far in the softening of Divine Judgment, he must also not forget the Gospel of love, grace and mercy.

Happily, God has a wonderful method of forgetting forgiven sins! He does not call back our repented and forgiven sins, our outworn follies and long-ago neglects to reproach us with them—as others sometimes do. Why therefore should not we imitate God's love and mercy? Why, in short, any self-reproach?

The bringing of people to the cross, through the influence of a love that warms the heart, will add more souls to God's kingdom than could possibly be added by high-pressure or legalistic methods or great intellectual display.

It is better to satisfy the soul than the intellect. Simple kindness is better than much oratory. When in doubt as to what to preach and how, preach the love of Christ.

Unfortunately, the word "love" is often misunderstood. In the Christian sense the word partakes of holiness, being intimately associated with the holiness of Christ. Its aim is the happiness of man, not a passing, earthly happiness, but one which ever deepens and grows until finally in heaven its fullness is realized.

Love engenders sacrifice. Even the smallest of sacrifices, if performed in Christ's name, spread the gospel of love of God and man. They convince and convert hearts which would be unmoved by the best sermons.

Love is sacrifice. Sacrifice is love. The two are not merely related, they are inseparable. God is love. If we keep in God we will keep in love.

THE PROPHET AND STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is by no means a popular theme for the average pulpit. But, unpopular as it may be to talk about what man owes to God, it is nevertheless the duty of the prophet to make known to his hearers the real meaning of the words: "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?"

It is written: "Ye are not your own, ye have been bought with a price."

When we begin to think of all that we owe to God, we are surprised just how little is left that really does belong to us.

Life, land, silver, gold, time, talents, cattle—all are God's. We also read: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein."

Not only do we all belong to God and all that we have, but the Divine command is: "Give an account of thy stewardship."

The prophet therefore will do well occasionally to refer his hearers to the first part of the sixteenth chapter of First Corinthians, where we are told about the Christian rule of giving, when to give, who shall give, how to give, and why to give.

Failure to emphasize these matters may lead to individualism, smug self-satisfaction and gross selfishness. An isolated and self-centered congregation will, sooner or later, lose its best powers for usefulness.

In presenting the matter of stewardship the proper approach is all-important. People naturally rebel against being belittled and scolded. For that reason, whenever possible, let an appreciative word be spoken when faithful service has been rendered.

Praise the sacrifices of faithful hearts. Encourage each worthy cause by a tactful presentation of its merits. The tactful presentation will make for liberality in the offering.

The disciples whom Jesus sent out were admonished to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. The modern minister

needs this same admonition. He needs tact, diplomacy. He should also possess, or develop, business acumen.

Jesus exercised the utmost shrewdness when He said: "Let him that is without sin among you first cast the stone at her." Jesus was both wise and brave. "Where are thine accusers? Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."

What have we here? Wisdom, a knowledge of human nature, courage in dealing with men? Yes, all that—and more. Sympathy, kindness, love—love for saving souls lost in sin.

Saint Paul saw the wisdom of a proper approach to men's hearts. Before he rebuked his hearers for idolatry he tactfully addressed them as "men, brethren, fathers."

To be sure, there are those apostles of stern rebuke who can cite some excellent Scripture in behalf of their methods. At the same time, it is better, in addressing people in the interest of Christian liberality, to speak kindly, tactfully, temperately.

In this connection we call to mind the advice of one who said it was better to try to melt the hearts of hearers than the wax in their ears.

It is always good to recount to the congregation the record of its accomplishments. Put the members on their honor. Praise the faithful and the delinquents will often take the hint. Tell all to decide with God what they are to give. The minister can not be expected to know just what each man is able to contribute. When the problem is puzzling and advice must be given it is always good to say: "You and God settle that."

One would not want his father or mother to have to say: "I want you to come to see me," or "I wish you would buy me a present."

Gratitude and generosity, under such conditions, lose their beauty and their blessing. This thing that is true in our earthly relations is more than true in our dealings with God.

Generosity by invitation, or that which is more or less compulsory, is not the best. Unwilling devotion does not warm the heart of the Eternal.

By word and deed, seek to encourage gladsome giving, joyful generosity and spontaneous and cheerful devotion.

On a visit to my old church in Baltimore I referred to the wonderful attendance at services of worship. Subsequently a lady

came to me and said: "We have always been faithful in attending church because, when we were children, you taught us our duty to God and to the church."

Let the Gospel minister learn from this simple utterance. Let him teach children their duty to God and to His church.

THE PROPHET AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Too much importance can not be attached to the work of the Sunday School teacher in cultivating the friendship and confidence of children and in leading them ever deeper into the Christian life.

It is the child who inherits the earth. It is the child who is the hope of the church. If permitted to grow up with insufficient or faulty religious instruction the child will suffer, the church will suffer and the world will suffer.

How important, therefore, is the nurture of children along religious lines! With what tender care and with what earnestness preachers and teachers should labor together to meet this obligation!

Sunday School teachers should be reminded of the seriousness of their task. Theirs is a duty in which hard work is more plentiful than honor and praise.

Theirs is a duty in which example and precept must go hand in hand. Let the Sunday School teacher remind his or her scholars of the fact that, being baptized, they are members of the church.

Let the teacher bring the pupils into the church and instruct them how to worship and how to take part in all religious services.

Too often the habit of going to Sunday School and *then going home* has been developed at the expense of faithful church attendance later on.

The teacher who is sympathetic and capable can correct this difficulty by encouraging both Sunday School and church attendance on the part of children.

Let the minister take a vital interest in the work of the Sunday School teacher. Let the teacher work with the minister.

This spiritual partnership—with Christ as the guiding member—will make the Sunday School a blessed agency for the winning of souls to God.

Finally, in his rôle of prophet the minister—and certainly the Sunday School teacher—should not fail to give a prominent place to children, to their plays, to their laughter when he meets them on the street or elsewhere. If he would interest

them and gain their confidence, he must himself be likeable, kindly and interesting; also, he should meet with them as much as he reasonably can.

THE PROPHET AND HIS BRETHREN

We are told on indubitable authority that "we are brethren."

This injunction should be emblazoned as the shibboleth of the prophet in his attitude toward his brethren.

If prophets of God be not brethren in their relation one toward another, courteous, civil, loving, fair, how can they reasonably expect their parishioners to be at peace among themselves?

When God grants blessings and special abilities to His prophets it should be the desire of all to rejoice together. Such blessings should be a stimulus to all to work and pray the harder.

Envy does not affect the envied, but rather does it eat as a canker at the soul of those who are possessed by it. On the other hand, brotherly love will seek to give all a share in the blessing given. "Love the brotherhood" is as important today as it was when Peter first spoke.

It is, indeed, a wonderful thing when the prophet lives and acts toward his brethren

in such a truly Christian manner that he causes them to say of him: "How he loves us!"

The example of one such man in any circle is as a fountain of healing water poured out upon parched soil—it is a stream of blessing upon others, quickening and refreshing them. And how it buoys one to receive words of encouragement and commendation!

Remember, others are just as human as we, and a word of praise to them, properly given, may prove as "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

More flowers given to the living and less carried to the dead will thrill more hearts with gladness. Postmortem kindness and love can not soothe troubled spirits. A word can lift, and a word can destroy. Appreciation is as a rainbow in the sky.

When the prophets of religion see good rather than bad in each other; when they encourage and give a kindly boost to a brother-prophet's work; when they "talk up" one another to outsiders; when they praise rather than blame; when they rejoice in each other's success and sympathize with each other's failures, they then show themselves to be not only those who love their

fellowmen, but also those who, at least in small measure, merit the love of those whom they esteem.

THE PROPHET AND THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD

The true worship of God needs to be stressed more strongly in this age when materialism and formality play so large a part in life's program.

Very easily do some people conceive the idea that to be a Christian is to recite a creed, say church-prayers, attend church and throw some loose change into the offering plate.

All these may be the fruits of religion, but they are not enough for a strong, stabilized faith in God.

Such people will see very little in worship and gradually they will become indifferent to the means of grace.

Without being aware of any change in their own hearts, they will grow lukewarm spiritually and, in the end, will fall away completely.

True worship is more than an outward performance, more than creeds and formulas and read prayers.

It is communion of the soul with God. It is a matter of God's spirit speaking to man's spirit and man's spirit replying: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," rather than "Hear, Lord, for thy servant speaketh."

The highest expression of such worship is manifested when the worshipper, moved by a holy urge, falls humbly and penitently at God's feet in devout adoration and when, with holy joy, in the communion, he receives the body and blood of Christ as a positive pledge that, in Calvary's sacrifice, all his sin has been forgiven.

Faith to commune thus with God and to trust in the Saviour's merits is the heart of true worship. Without such faith all worship and pretence in that direction will be as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Let the prophet proclaim and exemplify the true worship of God!

The Ministry of Prayer is a vital part of true worship.

The prophet's acquaintance with his people's intimate needs, which the contacts of the week have revealed—bereavements, misfortune, sickness, loss of property, broken friendships, disappointments, business and family perplexities, and many other problems of a busy congregation—will

direct his intercessory prayers at the throne of Divine Grace.

In consequence, the worshipper will feel that the prophet who prays for and with him is personally interested in these problems and sorrows, and that the prayers are voicing the worshippers' own needs.

Such a ministry of prayer will bring numerous expressions of appreciation and joy from many who, after the service, will say: "Oh, pastor, your prayer was so comforting! You seemed to know all about me, and your prayer has given great comfort and relief."

II.

AS PASTOR

THE PASTOR'S PLACE

God's prophet has a wider duty than merely that of publicly declaring the Lord's will—a wider duty and a more tender one. His is the call to "feed the sheep" and to "feed the lambs" with Christ's own Gospel.

The weak, the sick, the troubled, the bereaved, the sinner—all such are embraced in this commission.

The Gospel minister, if he is to be efficient in this phase of his work, needs a first-hand understanding of the home and of human nature—he needs to know men—to know them as they display themselves at work, at play and in all the varied relationships of life.

Book knowledge is good, but here is a field in which something more than book knowledge is indispensable. Christ went among the people. He knew what was in man. He knew their problems and their needs.

Let the Gospel minister, as he visits from house to house and mingles with one group after another, remember the example of the Saviour.

You've heard the old saying: "A home-going preacher makes a church-going

people.” But, do you appreciate its significance?

Heed it and there will be little or no preaching in an empty church!

The vacant pew is neither inspiration to the preacher nor to the people. Better to sacrifice some pulpit work in favor of pastoral work if the choice must be made.

There are few people in the world who will not at one time or another find themselves in trouble and in need of spiritual advice. If neglected by their pastor at such times they frequently drift from the church and become hard to reclaim. It is easier to hold them by serving them well in the first place than it is to reclaim them once they have drifted away.

Here is hard work that no minister or would-be minister should wish to escape, remembering Edison’s definition of success—ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration.

You must wear out soles to gain souls.

Dear brother, heed that suggestion if you would gain souls for God’s kingdom and active, consecrated members for your church.

The minister largely makes his own program. He is master of his own time and

can, if he so wills, "play hookey" from his work.

If he does this, however, he will soon discover that his example is being followed by his parishioners who are absenting themselves from worship just as he absents himself from work.

Christ's command to the disciples was not only that they should preach, but also that they should compel men to come to the Gospel feast.

There may be, here and there, men able to preach as did Peter on Pentecost, but experience teaches that the average preacher will achieve the best results by going out first to seek lost souls and striving to bring them into God's house.

Souls permanently won for Christ are best won individually and not in any wholesale fashion.

The soul-physician will do well to diagnose each case separately. He will sit down beside each patient, gain his confidence, hear his story, then tell him the remedy Christ has to offer.

There is no better place to witness for Christ and to win souls for Him than in the simple duties of true pastoral work.

Success in the Gospel ministry is not a matter of chance. Here, as in other callings, accidents may enter, but they do not decide.

Let a man understand men, let him understand Christ's method of winning men. Let him make diligent preparation for pastoral work. Let determination and self-sacrifice and abounding love characterize his effort.

Such a one will not fail. He will find the lost, no matter where they may be. He will lay hold of their hearts. He will bring them to Christ.

All this means self-denial and sacrifice—it means a laying of one's self on the altar for others. But results will justify such consecration.

When they were laying away the mortal remains of Phillips Brooks in Cambridge, Mass., after that busy life for God and others had ended, someone said:

“He wouldn't spare himself.”

Another who heard the remark answered:

“That's why we are here, and that's why the world loves him.”

THE PASTOR PLEADING FOR SOULS

As a student in the seminary your humble servant was entirely without experience and

was now and again the subject of "wise cracks" from some of the more seasoned and experienced students.

At this time, in addition to being superintendent of a Sunday School, he was also the teacher of the Ladies' Bible Class.

Whether green and inexperienced or worse, he was at least sincere in his every word, both to the Sunday School and to the ladies of the class.

That this may be the better illustrated, let him recount briefly the story of the first reward that attended his pastoral work—the conversion of an amenable sister and of her more stubborn brother.

Speaking one day to the Ladies' Class, the author "packed an earnest punch" into the text which tells of Christ at the well and how He once said: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

The impression made upon one of the ladies was such as to cause tears to trickle down the sides of her slightly upturned nose.

It should be pointed out that the writer followed up that impression. Would the lady permit him to accompany her and her brother home? Perhaps discuss with her her apparent difficulty? Put her straight with God if she were not so already?

It worked (indeed, sincere, conscientious effort and follow-up work invariably do) and as we walked to their home, no opportunity was lost to gain both her confidence and that of her brother, who had voluntarily attended her to the class meeting.

Having arrived home, there was little left to add beyond fervent prayers that the Heavenly Father would send His forgiveness and blessing to both.

As suggested, the sister was amenable to persuasion; she was my first convert.

The brother, however, was more obstinate. Refusing to accept the Lord and Saviour, he was yet willing that I should come again "next Wednesday."

What if, on the first visit to their home, your humble servant was obliged to walk upwards of three miles and to forego his dinner, or that on the second visit he, poor seminary student, should be called upon to spend his last dime to hire a team, setting forth upon the quest in a driving rain?

Trifles, mere trifles, were these! The brother and sister joined the church and ever remained steadfast in the faith.

Thus, when the pastor pleads for souls, faithfully following the example of the Saviour, glorious results are bound to follow his efforts.

THE PASTOR AND PERSONAL EVANGELISM

A few days before Dr. Lyman Beecher died, a brother minister asked him a question. "Out of your long experience, tell me, what have you found to be the most important thing in the life of a preacher?"

"Not theology," was the reply, "and not controversy, but the saving of souls."

No earnest Christian decries or belittles theology. At the same time, it is possible to love theology and to be lukewarm toward souls, to be keen about the former and careless about the latter.

The most important thing in the life of a preacher is the task of saving souls. Every minister should have a zeal for souls.

Let the pastor, like Jesus, behold the doom of the wicked through tearful eyes! Let him think of such in his own particular city or town, as his own brethren—his own kinsfolk—gone wrong and in imminent peril. Then will his conscience be so aroused, in his passion for souls, that he will go even further than John Knox of old and exclaim: "Oh, God, give me Scotland, my own city, my own town, or I die!"

Without this love and this passion the efforts of the most brilliant preachers are bound to be fruitless and disappointing.

In the last of the recorded utterances of Christ is the command He gives His followers to go forth and to make disciples of all men.

Of Himself He says that all power is His in heaven and on earth. Nevertheless, as His words give evidence, He depends upon His friends to do His work here.

In a very real way He lays hold of the Gospel minister and says: "The Lord hath need of thee."

Christ's command — Christ's work — Christ's reliance upon those whom He has called—let the servant of Christ remember these things and the work of personal evangelism will assume a new importance and carry with it a brighter radiance than before.

Let the pastor also remember that, with all his personal gifts, he is only an agent in the hands of God and that the real power for salvation rests with the Holy Spirit.

He is a channel through which the Spirit works. Let him not obstruct that channel. Let him not dilute, disturb or pervert the message which the Spirit places upon his lips.

God does not save all men alike. The conversions of Paul, Matthew and Cornelius

were different and yet the same Spirit brought them about.

In approaching the ungodly let the pastor remember that God is powerful and that the Spirit's witness is adequate. In firm reliance on the Spirit and with a love for souls, let the servant of Christ go forth.

In due time he shall return, joyful like the farmer whose labor has been crowned with an overflowing harvest.

This inner urge, this passion for souls, should assert itself at all times in the activity of a faithful pastor and should be given free sway and right of way over all other interests.

It should be the inspiration behind all congregational effort, the source of a joy that makes hard work delightful and easy, a cause for rejoicing in the heart akin to that which fills the souls of the angels when a sinner repents.

It seems but yesterday that I called upon a certain family. The father, years before, had been defrauded by a man who was an elder in a church. He became so embittered against the church that he refused to go anywhere near a religious service. Having previously heard of the trouble, I decided to call on him. First I prepared my-

self by calling upon God in prayer. It was important business, a task that needed Divine help and guidance.

As I entered the room this father received me quite coldly. But I soon won his confidence—not by saying I had come to talk to him about religion, but by first discussing some topics of the day, then by speaking of the sudden death of a neighbor, then on the uncertainty of life and how God, even though we often forget Him, loves us like a father does his wayward son, only in a much greater degree.

Then I spoke of my own father's love for his children and how happy he was after receiving the last rites of the church. By this time the man's eyes began to moisten and, drooping his head, he said:

"Ah, yes, I was also once happy in the church; but you have heard all about it."

"Yes," I assented, "I have been told. But God did not wrong you. God loves you and He wants you to love Him."

After a few more words I suggested that we kneel in prayer, that he pray first and that he tell God just how he felt about the matter. We knelt side by side, at a couch, and as I placed my arm about him it seemed that his entire body shook. God's spirit had taken hold of his heart. He began:

“Oh, God, I am ashamed of it all. Forgive me.”

I then offered a short prayer, but before I arose he was in the embrace of his wife and daughter. What rejoicing there was that night in that humble home! Not only in his home, but in his heart, and also in heaven as God and His angels rejoiced over one more soul that had been reclaimed.

As I left him that night he put his arm about me and with a happy smile that brightened his face said:

“I am so glad you came to look up a lost sheep. I have been away from the church so long that I really felt ashamed to try to come back. Now I am happy and I want to connect myself next Sunday with the church of which you are pastor.”

Had I gone to this man and preached an eloquent sermon which explored the depths of theology I would scarcely have helped his soul. For he had become greatly prejudiced against the church and it was necessary to deal with that prejudice first of all.

When I took Jesus with me that night—when we together visited this man in his home, meeting him there face to face—it was different. The man was born again.

THE PASTOR AND THE INNER CLOSET

Few of the laity really know the deep meaning of Paul's words—"the care of all the churches." Some people seem to think that about all the average preacher has to do is to get up in the pulpit on Sunday, open his mouth and the Lord will tell him what to say; that afterwards he goes to the church-treasurer, draws his regular stipend, and all is done until the next time.

Grant that the pastor is willing to respond faithfully and readily to the call of the church for all regular and special services.

Grant, too, that he makes the most careful preparation for his pulpit messages.

Add to this his interest in the welfare of individual souls, his efforts to reclaim the erring, his efforts to win the unchurched.

Is he not, under such circumstances, likely to become an exceedingly busy man? Is there not a danger here that he may neglect his own spiritual welfare? Should not he beware lest, as Saint Paul put it, "in preaching to others, he himself should become a castaway"?

It is an experience, not easily explained, yet glorious in its reality, which comes into the life of the praying Christian, that those

who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

Maligned by men of the North, hated by those of the South, Lincoln was driven to his knees in prayer and there, in an inner room of the White House, he renewed his strength.

The one person above all others who, it would seem, did not need to pray, was Jesus. Yet we read how, on one occasion, "He went out unto a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God."

The soul needs its season for spiritual refreshment. This is true both of laymen and clergymen, of those who work in the factory and of those who minister in the sanctuary. Tired and jaded and sick and afraid, we all need to seek the quiet repose of silence that we may hear His voice saying to us: "Be still and know that I am God."

There—in the inner closet—the busy pastor puts on anew the whole armor of God. There he gathers strength and endurance so that he may run and not grow weary, walk and not faint.

All pastors need this special spiritual strength.

One of the greatest problems of every earnest pastor is the problem of himself—

his own physical, mental, social and spiritual fitness. There are times when he must be long-suffering, and be great in gentleness, meekness and self-control.

Careful and discreet as he may be at all times, he will be disappointing now and again to some who have prepared to be and who want to be disappointed. At such times he should not allow himself to be unduly irritated.

After all, the seeming slight or provocation may never have really been meant as such. At any rate, the Scriptural way is to "recompense to no man evil for evil," and "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

We sometimes best help answer our prayer by being changed ourselves—changed from being too sensitive, too easily provoked, too unkind, too harsh and censorious.

In the inner closet the devil has no part with the pastor. There we meet with God alone, and our decisions are very different from what they often are when made on the street corner after some heated discussion.

Pastors are the ones who should be long-suffering, for they teach by example as well as by precept. It can be said of all pastors

as it was said of Jesus: "They watched Him." Brother, if you would have a long and successful pastorate, be sure to spend much time in the "inner closet."

THE PASTOR AND THE FALLEN

"When I would do good evil is present. What I would do I do not, and the things I should not, those I do." So said Saint Paul.

And how like his experience ours is today. The world, the flesh and the devil form strong alliances.

Even when God's grace is permitted to enter the heart of individuals there is danger, for "the devil is a busy bishop in his own diocese" and ever seeks to tempt the soul and to undermine and overthrow our belief in God. He was bold even to the point of tempting the Lord Himself in the wilderness. Consequently the faithful must at all times watch and pray lest, falling into temptation, Satan gain the mastery over them.

As long as the Christian is on guard and in league with his Lord he can bid the old foe defiance. It is when he grows careless and is not on guard that he is caught napping.

No sooner, however, has the true Christian been beguiled and led into sin than a

sense of great shame sweeps over him. He has been defeated. His heart is dismayed. "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Such is his heart's cry.

Just here, however, he begins to flounder about in confusion, wondering whether or not God does forgive. The more he wonders, the more he flounders until, as it often happens, as a kind of last resort he seeks out his pastor to lay the matter before him.

The pastor's work, at this point, is not easy. It is hard to convince the erring—even the repentant man—that God does forgive sin. By a man's act of contrition and confession the pastor may believe that forgiveness has been granted.

But to convince the individual in question of the reality of this is the big problem. And yet, a soul is at stake! The pastor owes it to that soul to assist in its salvation.

To this end he may wish to take the confused mind back to the time when it first knew God and to say that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it may again be cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

Not only that, but according to God's word the sins of the believing shall no more be remembered against them. Such assurance is what most people wish to hear per-

sonally and quietly from the lips of their pastor.

Let the minister give it convincingly and clearly, making sure that the mournful sinner is sincerely sorry and anxious to turn to the Saviour who suffered for the forgiveness of all.

In presenting the reality of forgiveness let the pastor tell the fallen the matchless stories which the Bible relates.

In the New Testament how eloquent is the story of the prodigal son! In the Old, what a tale is that which tells of the wife of the prophet Hosea, who, with every good inducement before her, wilfully walked the streets of sin and hurried on her way to hell.

Such infidelity would ordinarily lead to separation and divorce, but Hosea had patience and faith; he was determined to save his wife. Instead of ordering her to "Be gone!" with the additional demand, "I never want to see you again," he patiently sought her out, found her, forgave her, and returned her to her duties as a wife and to the service to God.

That is something of a prophecy of Jesus in his dealings with the woman of sin whom men wanted to stone. How gloriously kind are the words of the Master as they have

gone ringing down through the years: "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."

Did the father of the prodigal son do the right thing? Did Hosea do the right thing? Did Jesus do the right thing? Did God do the right thing when He sent His Son into the world to bring forgotten truth home to the hearts of sin-discouraged men? Did Jesus do the right thing when He allowed Himself to be crucified that, through faith in Him, men might find forgiveness and eternal life?

Let these questions be answered by such displays of mercy.

What if the wayward were the pastor's own son or daughter or brother or sister? Would not the ties of blood serve to arouse a deeper compassion and a greater love and patience on his part?

Let the pastor seek to serve the fallen with the same solicitude that he would employ toward his own flesh and blood. Let him not turn aside from the humblest of earth's creatures.

Let him, with candor and with kindness, teach rebel lips this prayer or one like it:—

"Oh, my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my sins,

because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to renounce sin and to amend my life."

A good many people who have wandered from the way do not think of an immediate personal return to the God whom they have offended.

Their thoughts first turn to the kindly pastor, or to some faithful worker. They feel that these persons are nearer to God, that they have a knowledge of the way to Him and that they themselves are too evil and wicked to seek to draw near to Him in their own name. This feeling is the pastor's opportunity. Let him not be timid or slow in grasping it. Let him boldly declare that "God will forgive for Jesus' sake."

Above all, let the minister be on his guard against any hard spirit of judgment toward the fallen. If God does not condemn the contrite sinner, *who are we that we should judge?*

THE PASTOR AND CHURCH TROUBLES

Church troubles! These probably constitute one of the greatest problems of a busy

pastor. Even well regulated families have their differences, while in a large congregation the many families and individuals naturally do not all think and act alike.

Sometimes that little member, the tongue, as James relates, "is set on fire of hell, and lo, what a great flame a little fire kindleth." Sometimes a member of the church-staff or some special worker can be assigned to making adjustments and settling difficulties. But the surest way for quick action is for the pastor himself, if possible, to go at the very outset and to seek to bring about peace. He should avoid, of course, taking sides, because usually there is some justice in the contention of both parties. When the facts become known it often happens there is really no cause for differences whatever.

Frequently the people themselves are the powder can which is exploded with a single spark.

The tactful pastor will first get the facts. As moderator he will endeavor to have all concerned view the difficulty as Christians and to act accordingly. Kindly persuasion, visits to each and showing partiality to none—above all, kneeling with them in prayer—all this conscientiously done will often cause

the most belligerent and unreasonable persons to pause and then finally to forgive.

"Come, let us reason together," is the Scriptural way of converting sinners from the error of their ways. This is good advice to follow in the adjustment of church troubles. And as leader in such reasoning the pastor should step forth whenever petty squabbles arise.

Often bitterness and hatred are deep-seated between different families in the congregation. The pastor is sorely tried, at times, in his effort to reconcile the contending parties. Before they can be truly reconciled to each other they must first be reconciled to God.

If we bring our gift to God and remember that our brother has something against us, it is necessary that we should leave our gift at the altar and first be reconciled to our brother. Proper emphasis upon respect for this Biblical injunction will help settle many a long-drawn-out and hotly-contested argument.

One reason why some find it so difficult to become reconciled to others is because they themselves are not reconciled to God as they should be.

When truly reconciled to God it is not hard for any man to forgive those who have wronged him.

In his effort, therefore, to secure adjustments in family and congregational difficulties let the pastor frequently refer to Christ's own words: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you."

It is not enough to belong to church, to take the sacrament and to know the creed. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." Jesus' spirit was one of love—of love even toward His foes. He taught us such love.

Naturally we love those who love us and who are worthy of our love. How far beyond this, however, is the love of Christ who prayed for those who crucified Him! Love is the fulfillment of the law, of all the law that makes for health, happiness and true spirituality.

The man who is truly victorious is not the one who kills his enemy, but who has conquered him by kindness and claimed him as a friend.

"Even as Christ forgave," is the way we should ourselves forgive. We should be like Him, and until we are like Him, until we

get that ugly hatred out of our hearts, until we really do forgive and forget, we will neither be granted His full peace, nor will we be really satisfied with ourselves.

As pastors we should follow after peace. We should exhort the people to bury hateful feelings. We should, by word and deed, show them how to change their angry frowns into smiles of love and good-will.

"I can," says Paul, "through Christ." That is the great secret for Christian forgiveness.

THE PASTOR AND THOSE WHO SAY "I'M THROUGH"

No one will serve for any time in the ministry without meeting someone who presents reasons why he has no further use for the church. The discerning pastor will soon discover that the wordy complainant at best has a poor case to present.

One good method here is to allow the complainant to express his grievances even to the limit, to listen with the utmost patience to all he has to say, to allow him to talk himself *completely out*.

When he has nothing more to say quietly ask him to kneel with you in prayer and to ask God to help settle the matter. Having

knelt side by side, with your hand resting on his shoulder, ask him to lead in prayer.

Most likely this person kneeling by your side when you ask him to pray will say: "Oh, I can't pray." In reply it is only necessary to press your hand gently on his shoulder and to say: "Yes, just tell God how you feel—tell Him all about it."

In nearly every case, as it has been my experience, he will, with a trembling, penitent voice, say: "Oh, God, forgive me. You have been good to me, better than I deserve. Forgive me. Amen."

Jesus knew what it was to have followers forsake Him. He knew what it meant to have once-trusted friends say: "I'm through."

The Lord, however, often anticipated the disposition of men in this matter and forestalled their withdrawal by asking the question: "And will ye also go away?" Perhaps it was His look or His tone of voice, or slight emphasis on the second person pronoun "ye," which caused His disciples to pause in their weakness and to say: "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

When people say: "I'm through with the church and with religion," let them name something better to which they may turn.

God, through the church, offers to man the blessings of a happy home, of hospitals, orphanages, schools to mould character and other gifts that make for health, happiness and moral well-being.

Compare the civil and domestic conditions of Christian countries with those that are pagan. In which—the godly or the ungodly—will be found the greatest measure of peace, prosperity and happiness?

After all, there is much idle talk about quitting that amounts to nothing. No matter what men write and say, the Bible is in the world. It continues here—and, despite all our delinquencies and oppositions, it remains year after year the world's best seller. It is estimated that in this country alone 14,000,000 copies were sold during the year past and that the world at large purchased, in the same period, nearly 40,000,000 copies. It is foolish, therefore, in the face of such figures, to speak of the failure of religion or to say that people are losing interest.

There is today a deep and a widespread interest in religion. Faith in Christ is living and growing. Man's need is real and it is driving him again and again to the one means of soul salvation.

A man's threat to quit often comes out of the heat of irritation or excitement. Very

often he can be brought to his senses by a short personal interview of a Christlike and soothing nature.

Let the minister in this way meet the challenge of those who hastily say, "I'm through." He will then, in all probability, be rewarded by being told in effect, "It is all a mistake. I am *not* through! I will return to my responsibilities as a Christian—return to my obligations to God and to the church—return to the fervent, the old time, God-loving, God-serving religion."

The best people at times feel aggrieved, and often justly so, yet if given kindly consideration and their ire time for cooling, they will soon enough come to realize that nothing is gained by quitting and that best results are to be had simply by going ahead bravely, uncomplainingly and prayerfully.

Very often such people, returning to the church, bring with them a new zeal and become even better Christians than before. They gladden the heart of their pastor, and prove the truth of the Biblical promise that in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

THE PASTOR AND ABSOLUTION

For many years I visited an elderly lady who was a shut-in. One day, when I called,

she was alone. Now there are times when the sick wish to be confidential with the pastor but, being surrounded by the family and neighbors, they are generally denied the opportunity.

This visit of mine was her chance and she told me how, when young, she had been a worker in the church and Sunday School. She regretted that in her old age she was no longer physically able to go to church.

"I was so happy then. God loved me and I loved Him," she began. "But I sometimes wonder whether God loves me now," said she, tears filling her eyes.

"If God loved you as a child, He surely loves you in your old age when He sees you as a Christian, a devoted wife and mother who has reared a pious family," I said.

"Declare it to me," she pleaded.

At first I did not quite understand and so I asked, "What do you mean?"

"Declare it to me—declare it to me," she repeated.

"Oh, now I understand," said I, continuing: "Do you confess that, with your best efforts, you have fallen short?"

"Yes," she assented.

"Are you truly sorry for any sins you have committed?"

"Yes," she penitentially replied, as more tears came.

"Do you have faith in Christ that He is able and ready to forgive?"

"Yes," came the sincere reply.

"Then, as a servant of God, I declare unto you His divine promise of complete forgiveness of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

I had scarcely pronounced this absolution when the woman clapped her hands with joy. Wiping away the tears she repeated over and over again the words: "I am so happy." I then administered to her the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

This experience was a very revealing one to me. Out of it I learned something of the blessed service that Christian absolution, as our church conceives and presents it, can bring to souls in sore distress.

More than ever before, I now saw how the declaration of forgiveness brings rich comfort and how it is the best of all preparations for that most inspiring of Christian experiences—the reception of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

"Oh," you may say, "then you as a pastor claim to forgive men their sins?"

Yes, I would reply, if declaring God's promise to others with firmness and enthusiasm is forgiveness. Is it not written that if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins? Did not Christ say to His Disciples: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them"?

On the basis of these clear Scriptural statements let the pastor, in dealing with souls that are lonely and oppressed, declare boldly the grace and love of God.

Absolution is like the breath of heaven upon a weary and troubled heart.

THE PASTOR AND THOSE OF SLIPPING FAITH

Life has its varied experiences and many things are past finding out. Sometimes the more we attempt to explain the more confused we become. And yet, no one would destroy his radio or declare it useless because he is unable to explain its workings and mysteries.

Shall we lose faith in God simply because the supernatural is beyond our finite reason? What kind of faith have those who love God on the day of their prosperity but who, as soon as trouble arrives, declare: "I am done—there is no God"?

How is the pastor to reason with such unreasonable persons? How is he to help them?

When pain oppresses, when hope fades and sorrow stabs those who have long and faithfully served God, it is not an easy thing to convince men of the love that lies behind the words: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

With stoical spirit people often say: "Oh, forget your troubles!" But, deep under all, they often carry their troubles with them just the same, refusing to recognize that these prepare them for higher grades of spiritual living and draw them ever closer to Him who is their Saviour. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul's trust is one solution of this problem, but often, in their distress, men shun the solution; here they need patient instruction in order to be brought to it.

Let the faithful pastor set about his task by avoiding those matters that are beyond explanation or comprehension. Let him dwell on simple truths.

God cares. He loves us. Some day we will be with Him where there is no sorrow or pain. "As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

Bring these truths home. Repeat them over and again. Make sure they find their way into the heart. Quote frequently the words of faithful Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

God is not an angry God. He is not a foe. God is love. In the parable of the prodigal son He is that loving father who anxiously awaits the return of his wayward boy. God, as a father, is concerned about us. He has compassion. Indeed His love surpasses the most tender feelings we may display or evoke.

Sorrow is in the world and so also is sin. But God is not responsible for these. God is love. God is goodness. God is the Saviour.

Carry that argument and appeal into the common spheres of life; also, remember that the faithful Christian may often be disappointed in himself and in his fellow men, but will never be disappointed in God.

We may not always understand His acts and motives, but the things we can understand are reason enough for us to trust Him altogether for things not now clear to us.

Blind faith—well, some may call it such; but blind faith in God is far better than persistent doubt, which rejects that which can not be understood. It does not continue to be blind, but leads at last to the light.

By the simple method of trusting Him we come to know, out of our human experience, that He is good and that He does save.

When people speak of losing faith in God it is well to ask them in what or whom will they place their faith? To whom can they entrust their salvation, if not to Christ? To whom can they go if not to Him? There is no substitute for the Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is our refuge, He is our strength. He is our shepherd, our light, our strong rock, our God now and for all ages to come.

Let the minister set forth these truths in firm and friendly fashion. His words will comfort and convert those who hear. Because of his earnestness the weary will trust and try once more; those of slipping faith will take on a firmer grip, and out of the effort will come new faith—faith that will endure.

THE PASTOR AND THE UNEMPLOYED

Unemployment, with its resultant hardships, is one of the great scourges of humanity. Indeed there are times when it compels men and women to face the most excruciating mental and physical agonies.

Some are even brought so low they dare to destroy themselves and those dependent upon them. And all for the want of a job!

People with plenty do not have the slightest conception of what it means for a hungry man—with a hungry family waiting at home—to be told repeatedly: "There is no opening at this time."

What is such a man to do? The question is often laid at the door of the minister. What shall he say? What counsel or help shall he give?

The pastor can not delegate all such cases to welfare organizations, public charities and rescue missions. But there is a work here that he can do, a work that he should and must do.

Let him approach the matter fully realizing that it is a hard one. Let him bring sympathy and patience to bear upon it.

Let him do his utmost to relieve all actual physical distress that may exist.

The Good Samaritan act, at certain stages of the problem, is far more important than the priestly one. Those in distress need and wish more than a pat on the back.

Again, in ministering to the physical needs of those in distress, the pastor should use the circumstances as an opportunity for

the giving of good advice. Let him warn against violence and bitterness. Let him plead for patience and courage. Let him speak hopefully of the future.

On Sunday, if possible, let his sermon partake of the experiences of the week. Let the pastor speak of the need that exists. Let him encourage the strong and the wealthy, as they are able, to lend a hand. Let a fervent prayer go up in behalf of all who are without gainful employment and for all who suffer for lack of food and other necessities of life. Such a sermon and prayer, coming out of the actual experiences of the day, will carry conviction. They will help.

The prophet Elijah was one who mingled with the people, who knew their problems and who was personally interested in those in distress.

Jesus said: "I am among you as one that serves."

Followers of Jesus will do well to remember His example, to dare to deal with men and women at close range, to carry the Gospel beyond the four walls of the church, to carry it to those places where the troubled are often caught and crushed in the bitter rush and struggle for the necessities of life.

Very often the sad cry is raised by those caught up in the mad scramble: "No man cares for my soul." There often seems to be good excuse for such bitterness.

Those who might care and who might help are often too slow in arriving. Let this not be said of a Lutheran pastor! Let him with tenderness and sympathy receive those who come. Let him seek out those who need his help but who are often slow to ask it.

Many of the most pleasant experiences in the pastor's work will come out of his efforts to help. To lift a fallen man to his feet—to see such a one gratefully go his way and to travel on to success and high character, not overlooking as he journeys onward his obligations to God and responsibilities to His church—what greater reward can any servant of Christ ask?

And yet there is a greater reward, the reward that shall come at the last when He Himself shall speak and say: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me."

THE PASTOR AND THOSE IN MARITAL TROUBLE

The pastor occupies a unique position in the matter of helping those who have been overtaken by marital trouble.

In the field of pastoral service he can in this connection make a wonderful contribution toward human happiness.

If more people would go to the pastor before going to the court the divorce rate would immediately fall. Unfortunately, many married people seem to crowd God out of their lives. Living without a mutual understanding, and failing to work together with sacrifice, devotion and determination to reach a common goal, they seem to fall easy prey to dissension, divorce and other troubles.

A pastor's deep sympathy naturally goes out to such unfortunates as must endure cruelty, infidelity, and non-support. It is sad, but only too true, that the latter is sometimes prolonged until heirlooms are sold to buy coal, and wedding rings to purchase medicine for babies. The outside world little appreciates the veritable hell which some endure, for the sake of concealing their troubles from neighborhood gossip. With the hope that a better day may come, some of these victims hold on to the very last.

One sometimes wonders just what is best to do. At any rate, something must be done, and here certainly a pastor can often do better work than a lawyer.

What remedies shall the pastor apply when such trouble invites his attention? How shall he approach his patients both of whom, as a rule, are stubborn? He should neither scold them nor preach at them.

First let him strive to win their confidence and to show them what a terrible situation they have created. From this point let him lead to other matters.

Let him speak of the days of courtship, insert a pleasantry which may cause stern lips to relax in a smile. Once this is accomplished, it becomes easier to soften rebellious spirits, to take each party by the hand and to kneel in sincere, soul-searching prayer.

Then will hearts be melted. Tears of repentance will fall and will wash pride away. Arising, the pastor may wish to join their hands and say: "Now, my children, kiss and make up!"

Get the promises of both never again to refer to past differences and their promise to begin their marriage anew.

I do not recall a single instance where the above method failed to bring reconciliation and happiness.

Even the worst of cases have been almost miraculously changed from a prison hell to

a home where love reigns and all is peace, pure and plenty.

True, many efforts may not always be so successful. But even so, the pastor, if he is alert and sympathetic, can do much to correct trouble and to restore faded happiness.

THE PASTOR IN THE SICK ROOM

Before going into any sick room the pastor should make diligent preparation. He should pray for grace to do his work well.

He should try to visualize the situation he is to face and to provide for emergencies that may arise. The words he speaks and the prayer he offers for the sick should be thought of in advance.

It often disturbs the sick and causes them to think they are worse than they really are when they learn the pastor has been summoned.

Let the pastor anticipate such fear by looking his "friendly best" when he enters the sick room. Let him bring, not a look of despair, but a face radiant with hope and good cheer.

Let his conversation be encouraging and by all means not too long. A five-minute call is often better than a prolonged visit.

In many cases the patient may have taken medicine or been given some pain-deadening drug. A long visit, under such circumstances, may intensify distress as the patient may not wish to embarrass his visitor by asking him to withdraw.

There are times when only the shortest visit can be made. Take advantage of those precious moments. Give a friendly greeting, a pleasant smile, a prayerful wish. ("May the Lord Himself be your physician and healer!") Much good may often come from just such calls if wisely made.

It is obvious that there are times when it is better for the pastor not to go into the sick room at all. In such cases, if possible, it may be well to gather the family together in another room and to offer up a prayer there. For God answers prayer though not made in the sick room itself, and the same blessings and benefits accrue that would be present when pastoral ministrations are given at the bedside.

Occasionally the sick will wish to talk at length and to receive encouragement. Let the pastor, under such circumstances, not seem to be in a hurry.

Let him answer questions, read comforting verses from Scripture, offer fervent

prayers. Let him realize that a strengthened faith in Christ is sometimes better than medicine. Let him direct the minds of weary sufferers to the Christ who suffered. Let him tell of the patience of Jesus and how Jesus bore, not His own, but our burden.

If He could do that for us shall we not strive to follow in His steps and to be brave for Him?

Shall we not remember the promise that if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together?

When Livingstone was asked what had sustained him during his trials he replied that his strength had come from the promise of Jesus: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Remembering such comforting truths and using them tactfully and tenderly, the pastor will make his visits to the sick room true errands of mercy.

THE PASTOR AND THOSE BEREAVED

Here is a field where, above all others, the pastor needs to walk slowly, softly, prayerfully. For, if there is one place more than others where heart-ache is heavy and souls are sensitive and in need it is in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Why is the young mother taken when there are little ones who need her loving care? Why is the youth taken at a time when he is about to step forth, in all the power of manhood, into the arena of life? Why are influential men and women removed by death from positions of great service to their fellowmen? Why do the wicked apparently live on and on and the righteous so often die in the very prime of life?

“What I do now thou knowest not, but thou shalt know hereafter,” is a Divine explanation. We ask why because we know only in part as though we sought to see and were compelled to gaze through a clouded glass.

If we understood as God does we would praise Him. We would say “Thy will be done” and we would say it, not reluctantly and bitterly, but joyfully, hopefully, gladly.

And yet, even the Son of God on the cross asked the question “Why?”

The pastor, with all his wisdom, may not be able to explain why Jesus asked this question, but he will find the Saviour’s query something of a comfort to those bereaved.

Jesus knows our every weakness — He knows because He Himself experienced earth's deepest woe.

This thought, coupled with the story of the love of Jesus and His saving power, will bring healing balm to hearts that are sad and sick with grief.

There are times of emergency when the pastor, going to strengthen others, feels the need of strength for himself.

When "flu" and death stalked through Baltimore in 1918 it fell to my lot to officiate at eighteen funerals in three days. This was a sad experience, one that almost overwhelmed me.

To be sure, your servant was ready to serve, but oh how heavy is the hand of death—how bitter the wounds it makes—how the minister needs Christ in such emergencies!

Very often it is good simply to invite those who mourn to trust in the Heavenly Father. Too much effort to explain often arouses new questions, new fears, new sorrows. Let the pastor avoid creating confusion.

Let his language be simple and sincere. If the case in hand is beyond any explanation or interpretation—if appropriate words

are hard to find—let the pastor do that which is always in order: rehearse once more in all tenderness the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

What a wonderful story it is! How comforting amid all circumstances of sorrow and bereavement! Jesus was cut down in the prime of life when, as it might seem, the whole world needed Him. Arising from the grave, He has become the first fruits of them that slept. This risen Christ is ever with us. He still speaks and says: "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there ye may be also."

That text will serve for every occasion of the kind we are now considering, and the more pronounced and seemingly justified the bereavement, the more in order is the text.

Coincidentally, there comes to me as I write, a letter from a stranger who says:

"Two months ago I lost my baby. I have been reading one of your books and it really seems as though you wrote one particular chapter for me alone. It made my soul cry out to my Heavenly Father to manifest Himself in me more clearly than ever before. This He did and I was born again a new person. I'll cling to Him always."

At the time her infant left its earthly home this mother was heartbroken. But in due time she saw the light of the love of Jesus and she now pledges life-long allegiance to Him. Instead of thinking of her baby as dead she now realizes that it is one of God's angels, gone before to welcome her, when she herself, one day, shall depart and her soul ascend to heaven.

And many another bereaved mother who has refused to be comforted has lived to learn that all things work together for good for those who love God and who do not question His will.

The pastor goes among his bereaved charges as a spiritual physician, healing, helping, cheering, guiding, serving, saving.

In times of bereavement he proves his worth. With cords of unfailing love he binds the hearts of many to the God who, though at times seemingly hidden within the shadows, is nevertheless keeping watch above His own.

THE PASTOR AND STARVING SOULS

"Starving souls!" Is there anything striking here?

There are starving souls about us. In our cities, especially in many of our great

apartment houses, there are scores of people, young and old, whose names are on no church roll and whose spiritual life is waning for lack of food to sustain it.

Folks do not grow in Godliness and in Christian grace without the encouragement of worship, prayer and devotion.

No one can have the mind of Christ in him unless he waits on the Lord and learns of the Scripture and renews his strength by careful and conscientious effort.

Unless the soul is fed it starves. There are many whose bodies are radiant with health but whose souls are weak and anemic for lack of the food that quickens and strengthens.

A district attorney recently said that young men who commit crimes, as a rule, have turned their backs on religion and usually have not seen the inside of a church for at least six years. Starved souls!

My appeal, therefore, to every pastor is that, as far as it lies within his strength and opportunity, he go out in search of these spiritually starving individuals.

The man who wants to catch fish or bag game, does not wait for fish or game to come to him. Mahomet ordered the mountain to come to him, but finally reconsidered

his command and paid a special visit to the mountain.

So the pastor who would build up a substantial congregation must—if he wants to reach the masses, if he would gather into the Master's fold the spiritually weak and starving souls—go out like a good shepherd in search of the lost. He must go where the people are, get their confidence, show he is interested in them, mingle with them, be part of them.

The Gospel minister must get into such close contact with the people that like the prophet Ezekiel of old he can say: "I sat where they sat." Then, to his delight, he will find they are often ready to respond and to unite with the church.

The pastor in this connection will do well to call his church workers together, coach them in the best methods of evangelistic work, and send them forth to search out non-church-goers.

Once found, such non - church - goers should be asked to meet with the pastor at appointed periods for religious instruction preparatory to church membership. With these united efforts on the part of the pastor and efficient members of the congregation, it will not be long before there will be such a religious awakening in the congregation

as will not only result in the rescue of the many starving and neglected souls, but will be an answer to the oft asked question,

"How to Fill the Church."

Brother, if you are having an overabundance of vacant pews in your church at times of religious services, try out this method. It works. It will work for you and help solve some of your problems. "The fields are often ripe unto the harvest," but unfortunately, "the laborers are few" for the rescue of the many who are perishing, yea, spiritually starving.

They may think they are not hungry. They may boast their independence and assert their sufficiency. But once you come to know them as they are and to look beneath the surface of things, as a good shepherd of souls will always seek to do, you will be surprised to find them hungering and thirsting after the righteousness that alone can bring peace.

Deal with such persons boldly. Carry them in thought back to their childhood days. Speak of the time when they mingled with God's people in the Sunday School and the church. Repeat the words of some hymn. In all probability they once loved to sing the very one you will select. It may

then not be long before their eyes will fill with tears and they will speak of repentance.

Do not be disappointed if some refuse your plea. Years of forgetfulness and of sinful living are not set aside in an hour's conversation.

Give the seed of repentance time to grow. Some are won easily—thank God for that. As for those who refuse to be won do not give them up—pray for them—wait for them!

THE PASTOR AND THOSE SORELY AFFLICTED

The problem of affliction is a difficult one to solve. It is highly involved.

The influence of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lure of the devil—all these, wrapped up with the power of heredity and environment, not to mention the factor of man's free will to choose, create a situation that is hard to untangle, hard to explain and harder still when it becomes overshadowed by human sorrow and woe.

Often God's blessings come disguised. We seldom try to understand His purpose and His plans. We turn away from Him at the very time we ought to be turning to Him.

How difficult does affliction become when we do that!

Jesus did not come to make things easy for us. He came rather to make us strong. By teaching us to endure He would show us how to become strong. God covers the lamb and the lion, but civilized man must work for his clothing. He feeds His lowly creatures. They toil not, neither do they spin, but to man the Lord God said: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The very nature of things seems to conspire to make life difficult to endure.

In approaching those sorely afflicted the pastor must be careful not to harden their hearts. Just why the wicked often flourish while some of God's good children languish in distress is past finding out.

But we are comforted by the fact that the present is only a moment in God's infinity and in the short duration of their suffering the righteous, like gold in the smelter, are being tested and purified and prepared for heavenly purposes. Shelley said of the great poets:

"They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

In the furnace of affliction, the blind Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, the deaf Bee-

thoven composed the Fifth Symphony, the imprisoned Paul wrote many of the Epistles and thus Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

No matter how great may be our sorrow or suffering, if we will but stop and look we will find we are but stepping into the footprints of Him Who went before and Who "hath borne our grief."

Laymen who endure affliction bravely are often able to preach better sermons than do those who stand in the pulpit.

The church today has many afflicted saints who teach lessons in humility, sacrifice, obedience, patience and cheerfulness. These sacrificial lambs are silent rebukers of the many who have health, some money, friends, a job, etc., but who are not satisfied.

Visit such angelic souls! Learn from them how to better your own life and to stand upright amid the cares that are upon you in the work of the church. And having learned, visit those who are rebellious against God. Tell them of your experience and how, by linking your will to that of God you have found strength. Do not begin by saying that "God has His purpose in sending afflictions." To do this is really to pour acid into open wounds and to play the part of Job's comforter.

One better way would be to tell the afflicted that God is a loving Father who cares for His children, that He is their best friend, and that in due time His love will become as clear as the morning sunlight.

As prophet you are not offering to the people in times of trouble and doubt a mere vague religion, word, concept, code of ethics or an abstract principle. Rather, you have something real to present in the person of Jesus Christ. Once people set themselves within the reach of Him—of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—they want more and more of Him and all that He has, because He is a loving and sympathetic friend. He knew the pinch of poverty and the heart-ache that comes from betrayal and humiliation! As—none—suffered, suffered He! Fortunately for us, His tears were mingled with those in the common cup of sorrow!

As a proof of God's love, speak of how He so loved the world that He sent His Son into it to establish newer and truer religious concepts, to suffer in proof of their validity, to die on the cross, arise from the dead and ascend into heaven (tangible, visible manifestations!) in order that those who will rightly accept them shall not perish as atheists, but have an ideal after-earth life

for all time. Yes, tell the story of Gethsemane and Calvary, of how Jesus suffered physically and mentally for the sake of blessings that were to come to others.

THE PASTOR AND HIS PARISHIONERS

Saint Paul once said his preaching was not in the power of words but in the demonstration of the Spirit. Paul's declaration has a meaning for the modern pastor. Unless the pastor of today can bear witness, out of his own experience, to the Spirit's power all his book knowledge will fail him.

Without the Spirit, his preaching will be mere words. There will be no life in his message.

Jesus says: "The words I speak unto you are spirit and life." The pulpit message of today must have spirit and life in it—God's Spirit and the life that is Christ. It must also have truth in it and be delivered by faithful hearts who are ready to make it count for good.

The best message is lost if proclaimed in an empty church. It is not enough, therefore, that the members of the church should hear as they may find it convenient.

They should join hands with the minister and fill the church that the Word may be heard to advantage.

“Ye are my witnesses!” The busy pastor should impress this truth upon his people. They are also, in a way, the disciples of Christ. They must testify for Christ. They must aid in the preaching of the Gospel. They must do their part that the church be filled with eager, attentive listeners.

In the church are many true Aarons and Hurs to uphold the hands in work the pastor seeks to perform. They hunt the lost and strayed ones. They bring them to him to be led to Jesus.

On appointed evenings be always in your study, ready for any who might be brought in by faithful workers. There explain the teachings and doctrines of the church and what it means to believe in Jesus the Saviour.

After faithful preparation these newcomers should be received into the church membership; many of them will ever remain faithful followers of Jesus, as already pointed out.

Every member of the church should be taught to win others. Let such work be started in the home. Let the circle be grad-

ually widened. Consistent emphasis on this plan will gradually fill the empty pews and enlarge the work performed for the Blessed Master.

The pastor should not fail to impress upon the members of the Sunday School that they are members of the church. Youth is the time for training in church attendance and worship. Do not apologize for a second service, even to children.

Children can go to the movies, they can stand in line and wait, they can stay through a long performance. Therefore, an hour in Sunday School, followed by an intermission period, then an hour in church, is not too much. Perhaps it is in great part the fault of the pastor that children today are not taught how to go to church and how to worship. Perhaps the pastor has been too indulgent on this point.

Too many church activities—especially social affairs and entertainments—are often a reason for empty pews.

People come to entertainments and suppers—and are absent from church. Such things should not be. Ice cream is good but it is not food for the soul.

Nothing can take the place of the Gospel and of Christian preaching and worship.

The social or entertainment that thrives at the expense of the regular worship is unwholesome and harmful.

Let the pastor face these truths courageously. Let him set true ideas for himself and for the congregation and let him not be turned aside from them.

THE PASTOR AND DAILY ORDEALS

Shall God be blamed for the sin that is in this world? Such a thought is a confession of guilt and weakness on the part of him who declares it. God must not be blamed. It is man who is guilty.

Out of sin sorrow has come. Human sorrow is not easily endured. Yet God uses it as a power to purify and to save.

What if there were no sorrow, no ordeals, no struggle, no tears? Whence would come fortitude, courage, faith?

Are not our afflictions, self-wrought though they may be, often the very means by which God will claim the righteous for Himself?

Let us not lose faith in God because of afflictions. Rather let us remember the many blessings we have received from Him to this point in our lives. We are too prone to forget all past blessings the moment some trouble or misfortune comes to us.

I had a very dear brother, a physician, who was called "the poor man's friend." He was indeed the faithful friend of all, no matter what their creed or faith. Best of all, he was the friend of God. During the last weeks of his life he suffered much. People would go to him in the hospital and would try to comfort him by saying in effect: "God sent this trouble, but all will be well in the end." To such well-meaning friends he would reply: "You make me smile. God is not afflicting me. He is helping me. God is good. God is love."

Yes, God is love, and the ordeals which He permits men to undergo are—rather than considered punishments—universally believed to be a part of His general scheme of things. Besides, many of our ordeals are the direct result of circumstances over which, in this advanced, enlightened day, we should have every control because financially capable thereof, whether on a home, neighborhood, local, county, state, interstate, national or international scale.

Because the rules of sanitation are not observed fever and death invade the home, but that fault is not of God. Because certain swamps and marshes are not drained disease invades the land, but the fault is not of God. Because the city people are care-

less and water becomes polluted or refuse not removed, little children sicken and die, but the fault is not of God.

Although God guides and overrules all for the best, people must exercise care, must employ scientific knowledge, must remember that obedience to the laws of health is often as important as the habit of daily prayer. God gives us knowledge and common sense. We must use these and not charge Him for our mistakes.

Life is a conflict. Faithful work is never easy. An upright life is a weary struggle. We never solve our problems by trying to run away from them. The easiest way is often the hardest in the end.

We pray to be delivered from trial and temptation and yet, not to be tried and tempted, is to lose the courage and strength we need.

The daily ordeal is hard—hard. In the end, however, we come to know that it is a pathway that leads to peace and happiness.

Christ, in His trial, once asked that the cup be permitted to pass. But, at the same time, He said: "Not My will, but Thine be done."

When ordeals try the soul of the busy pastor, let him think over some of those

undergone by Christ, and let him pray as did his Lord.

The pathway filled with ordeals is a rough road to travel, but it is the road that leads to the heights. Dare, then, to walk it, brother of mine, with a smile on your lips and a prayer in your heart.

THE PASTOR'S BEST PATTERN

It is natural enough that the young pastor should admire some successful and older ecclesiastic and should copy after him. In so doing, however, it is possible—there is even a danger—that the young pastor overlook the best pattern of all—Christ.

The Christly pattern is high, to be sure, but the attainment of it is within the range of the humblest disciple. Since Christ is the best He should always be placed first.

More and more He should be imitated and followed. This does not mean that any one should go about with a "holier than thou" expression on his face and about his person.

It does mean, however, that men, looking at him, should be able to see that he has been with the Master.

In him the world should see a man of God who is both able and willing to help

them bear whatever troubles may come upon them. It is a sad commentary when church members say: "Our pastor? Oh, he is fine socially, and we adore him as a mixer, but we can not go to him with *our* troubles." If not to you, to whom may those in trouble go?

The disciples in their sorrow "went and told Jesus." Rich and poor, learned and illiterate, young and old—all knew they could go to Him. He not only had compassion on them, but He shared their griefs and made their sorrows His own. In like manner let the pastor proceed. Nor will his efforts be unfruitful.

In due time he will receive praise that will gladden his heart, a praise such as that "Ours is a true pastor. He can be counted on when we are in trouble. He must have been sent directly to us by God."

Jesus was humble. The spirit of humility is needed in every pastor. Jesus was kind. Simple kindness is indispensable in pastoral work. Jesus was sincere. It is sincerity that wins converts—and holds them fast to the faith.

Imitate Jesus!

TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTER

To reach the port of heaven, we must sail not only with, but also against the wind. And although the winds at times be contrary, sail on, and on, and on.

“ 'Tis the set of the soul that determines the goal.”

Failure and success often mark the difference between the coward and the hero. The minister who has no trials has no triumphs. Trials cause him to take an introspective view. They toughen within him a moral fibre that enables him to achieve triumphs. They enable him valiantly to endure rebuke, criticism and ingratitude.

The minister's trials are but stepping stones to glory.

Happy indeed is the minister who can laugh at his trials and preserve a gallant, unwilted front.

When difficulties arise, let the minister, with the power of the Holy Spirit, the charm of his manhood and the gift of his personality, transform his pulpit from a reading desk to a throne of God, where he offers his own soul upon the altar to God.

Let him there, as prophet, deliver such prepared messages as will quicken the

hearts of those who listen to him—messages born, not simply from books, but also from experience and prayer—messages that will be Pentecostal in their effect.

With such preaching, God will be glorified, souls saved, trials forgotten and carping critics silenced.

The triumphs of the Gospel minister are indeed so varied, so glorious and many, that in no other calling or vocation are there to be found the lasting joys, satisfaction and rewards that come to him.

And in the autumn of life, as thoughts flow to him from the sealed records of his yesteryears, it will seem that he speaks once more with his old friends and with a song of praise on his lips.

Such an old age will be a fitting crown of glory for a wonderful career in the work of the church. The people whom such a minister has served, because of their gratitude and lasting friendships which enrich the human heart, will bless his memory and thank God upon every remembrance of him. And, as in reverie he may climb the grades and travel through the beautiful vales where sheltered flocks feed in pastures green, his heart will be warmed by the golden glow

of the approaching set of the sun and his soul will be cheered and brightened by a rainbow-radiance promisory of a heavenly tomorrow and confirming the Heavenly Father's word: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

These thoughts and fancies, like a running brook that sings its melody to the night, will bear a sacredness akin to heaven itself.



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